

THE
CONDUCT
OF
ADMIRAL KNOWLES
ON
THE LATE EXPEDITION

Set in a True Light.

Magna est Veritas, et prevalebit.



L O N D O N:

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M DCC LVIII.





E R R A T A.

P. 5. l. 10. *for Report, read Opinion.*

P. 12. l. 5. *for ocular Denomination, read ocular D
monstration.*

P. 22. l. 5. *after informed, add, of it.*

T H E

C O N D U C T, &c.

CONSIDERING the subordinate Station in which I served on the late Expedition to the Coast of *France*, I little thought it would be in the Power of the most inveterate Malice to lay any Part of its Failure upon me. But I have found myself deceived. To take Notice of all the anonymous Pamphlets published on this Occasion, would be endless; and almost all agree in the same false Accusation. But there are two Pieces which seem to be principally regarded by the Public; and to these, as far as they have made me a Party, I will give an Answer. For I must own I am not so insensible to honest Fame, as to be proof against the venom of a malignant heart; and if I vindicate my conduct, by a deduction of facts which are undeniable, without calling in question the Conduct of Other people, it can give no Offence.

In the first of these Libels, intitled, "The Expedition against *Rochefort* fully stated, &c. by a Country Gentleman," the writer introduces his accusation against Me, by quoting at length the first article of the Report of the Board of Enquiry. When this is recited, I shall first give his own reasoning and objections, and then my answer to them.

I.

" It appears, that one cause of the Expedition having failed, is the not attacking Fort Fouras by Sea at the same time it would have been attacked by Land, agreeable to the first design; which certainly must have been of the greatest utility towards carrying your Majesty's Instructions into execution. It was at first resolved by Sir Edward Hawke, (Thierry, the pilot of the Magnanime, having undertaken the safe conduct of a ship to Fort Fouras for that purpose) but afterwards laid aside, upon the representation of Vice-admiral Knowles, that the Barfleur, the ship designed for that service, was on ground, at the distance of 4 or 5 miles from the Shore. But as neither Sir Edward Hawke nor the Pilot could attend to give any information upon that head, we cannot presume to offer a certain opinion thereupon.

This is the first article of the Report.—I am ready to allow, that as far as this Article goes, the Commanders of the Land Forces are acquitted; but if you will argue farther, that All the Commanders who were to conduct the Expedition were in no fault, especially if you insist as you do, that it appears plain, that Fouras was inaccessible by Sea, notwithstanding the Pilot Thierry's promise, which it should seem he could not make good, I totally deny your conclusion. A child in argument must see the fallacy of it. If the Fact was clear, that Fouras was inaccessible to shipping, how comes it to pass, that the not attacking it by Sea, is given as a cause of the Failure of the Expedition? No positive opinion, you say, was given upon it. Why was it not, and where was the necessity of leaving this point open for farther inquiry, after the return of Sir Edward Hawke and the Pilot, if it already appeared a measure impracticable? But impracticable is the word, and every thing from beginning to end is to be pre-

pronounced Impracticable. I say, that it appears to be far from certain, that Fort Fouras was inaccessible to shipping, and yet the Board of Officers did right to give no opinion, because Sir Edward Hawke and Thierry, Parties principally concerned, had not been heard. I will enter farther into the consideration of this matter, for some conclusion may be drawn from it.

I shall not enter into the reasoning of the General Officers who composed the Board of Enquiry, for giving or not giving the Report that they did, as I think that opinion, had it been determinate, was neither binding upon the Public, or me; it being more than probable, if three other Generals had sat on the Enquiry, they might have given a different opinion; nay, that those very generals who did compose that Board, would have given a different opinion themselves from what they did, had the whole Proceedings of the expedition been opened to them, or even the facts which appeared at the Court-martial afterwards.

II.

“ *It appears from the evidence of Vice Admiral Knowles, that the whole affair of this attack upon Fouras was delegated by Sir Edward Hawke to his Inspection, and that Sir Edward had proceeded so far in the execution of the plan, as to direct his secretary to begin an order to lighten the Barfleur for that purpose. But this was laid aside upon the remonstrances of Captain Graves, and Vice Admiral Knowles, that the Barfleur was aground, at between four and five miles from the shore; that then Sir Edward ordered him to try to carry the Bomb-ketches in, which he did; and run them aground at more than two miles and $\frac{2}{3}$ from Fort Fouras, where they were likely to have*

" been taken by row-boats : that then he run the
 " Coventry Frigate aground, five times within the
 " hour, at a greater distance from the shore than the
 " Bomb-ketch. That then (and it seems not till
 " then) he sent his Master to sound, and found that
 " at two miles distance from the fort, there was but
 " six feet water at high water *. All these notable
 " exploits were performed by Vice Admiral Knowles,
 " the same who it is said advised Sir Edward Hawke
 " not even to enter the road of Basque, lest he should be
 " bombarded ; the same one has formerly heard and
 " read of in Courts Martial ; the same who on a late
 " Parliamentary enquiry had the happiness to boast
 " such peculiar protection and countenance from you,
 " Sir ; the same who, as I have heard, detained the
 " squadron two days in sight of the French coast, be-
 " cause he had sent away the pilot destined to conduct
 " it upon a chase after a French ship. But I will
 " not recapitulate his virtues or his merit. It was
 " upon the remonstrance of this Vice Admiral, whose
 " station in command entitled him to at least so much
 " confidence from his superior Officer, that the resolu-
 " tion to attack Fouras by sea was laid aside. Now
 " then let me relate to you the reasons which induce
 " me to believe that notwithstanding this report of
 " Vice Admiral Knowles, Fort Fouras was acce-
 " sible by sea, though the Vice Admiral had not the
 " good fortune to find out the Channel.

" The

* Query. How high do the tides rise in the Bay of Biscay
 when the water at the mouth of the river Charent is but six
 feet at high water ?

No one acquainted with navigation would ask this
 question : because below *Bristol* the tide rises near forty
 feet, and yet above *Bristol* in many places there may be not
 above six feet water, and so at *Yarmouth* without and
 within the sands ; and in many other places there is great
 difference in the rise of the tides.

" The first part of the charge against me is,
 " That the whole affair of attacking *Fouras* was
 " delegated by Sir *E. Hawke* to my inspection. Let
 " us now see Sir *E. Hawke*'s manner of relating
 " that Story upon oath before the Court Martial,
 " (p. 108, 9.) Being ask'd whether at any and what
 " time a proposal was made to him to lay a Ship
 " to batter *Fouras*, he answered in the affirmative,
 " and said on the 24th of *September*, that he approv-
 " ed of the proposal, and the pilot of the *Magnanime*
 " was examined as to the strength of the place and
 " the depth of water near it : Elated with the suc-
 " cess of the 23d, and fond of the *Magnanime*, he
 " said at first before Captain *Mordaunt* he would
 " carry her in and destroy the Fort. The deponent
 " had attentively considered the shore, and was sen-
 " sible the *Magnanime*, which drew more water than
 " some of our three-deck'd Ships, could not be
 " brought near enough to batter the Fort, he
 " gave the pilot's Gasconade time to subside, and
 " then asked him if he could carry a sixty gun Ship
 " in against it ? He answered, her metal was not
 " weighty enough, as there were 24 pounders in
 " the Fort. He then proposed to him to lighten
 " the *Barfleur* two feet (this second conversation
 " was upon the quarter deck by the intervention of
 " a man well versed in such *French* as those sort of
 " people speak.) The Pilot seemed something satis-
 " fied with this, and in consequence the deponent
 " prepared an order to *Vice Admiral Knowles* to light-
 " en the *Barfleur*, and in the mean time gave him a
 " verbal order, who immediately went away to give
 " the necessary directions, and to enquire into the
 " practicability of the attempt. The pilot now re-
 " collected himself, and declared that even thus light-
 " en'd the *Barfleur* could not be carried near enough ;

“ that when she could come nearest at the top of
 “ high water, on the Ebb she must sink at least
 “ six feet in the mud, if not more, from which he
 “ could not answer whether she would rise. Upon
 “ trial afterwards the pilot could not carry a
 “ Bomb-ketch within random shot of the *Fort*, as
 “ *Mr. Knowles* informed him, in whom, as being
 “ the second Sea Officer in command, he appre-
 “ hends he might confide for that information.

“ I shall now have recourse to the testimony I
 “ gave both at the Enquiry and the Court Mar-
 “ tial. First at the Enquiry, (p. 43, 4.) *Vice Ad-*
 “ *miral Knowles* being asked by the board whether
 “ he knew of any proposal being made for attack-
 “ ing *Fort Fouras* by Sea at any council of war or
 “ meeting ; answered, he could not particularly
 “ charge his memory, but knows very well *Sir*
 “ *Edward Hawke* asked his opinion about it, and
 “ said that the pilot had told him that a ship could
 “ go within a small distance to batter it ; and *Sir*
 “ *Edward* directed his secretary to begin an order
 “ for the *Barfleur*’s being lightened for that service,
 “ the *Barfleur* drawing near two feet less water
 “ than the *Magnanime*. When he returned on
 “ board his own ship he sent for *Captain Graves*
 “ who commanded the *Barfleur*, to acquaint him
 “ with the orders *Sir Edward Hawke* had given
 “ him ; *Captain Graves* answered that the ship was
 “ aground where she layed, and he might look at
 “ her, for the water had ebb’d away a foot from
 “ her, and she then laid between four and five
 “ miles from the shore (*meaning the shore of Fort*
 “ *Fouras*.) He acquainted *Sir Edward Hawke* with
 “ this, who suppressed the order.”

Let us now see my deposition concerning this matter given at the Court Martial, where I was going to refer to the minutes I had in my pocket, of the Testimony I before had given the board of

Enquiry,

Enquiry, but was desired to relate it without (p. 99. Court martial).

“ Some of the Witnesses having mentioned “ Vice Admiral Knowles as being present when a “ discourse was had by Sir Edward Hawke, touch- “ ing an attack intended to be made on *Fouras* by “ sea, he was desired to inform the Court what he “ knows concerning that intention, or the practica- “ bility of such an attack, the Vice Admiral then de- “ posed in answer to the question ; that after the sur- “ render of the *Isle of Aix*, Sir Edward Hawke told “ him the pilot of the *Magnanime* had offered to “ carry in to batter *Fort Fouras*, he does not recol- “ lect at what distance, the deponent objected to “ the *Magnanime*, as she drew at least a foot more “ water than the *Barfleur*, and proposed that ship “ instead of her, as being of greater force as well “ as an old ship, and her loss therefore immaterial. “ Sir Edward Hawke directed the deponent to “ have the *Barfleur* lightened immediately for “ that purpose. When he returned on board “ his own ship; he sent for *Captain Graves*, and “ told him Sir Edward’s intention ; the captain “ replied his ship was aground where she then “ layed, being to the best of his judgment more “ than five miles distant from the *Fort*. He has “ since heard that *Colonel Brudenell* was aboard her “ at that time. Upon this several masters, to- “ gether with pilots, were directed to go sounding, “ particularly the master of the *Barfleur*, and of “ his own ship the *Neptune*. On his acquaint- “ ing Sir Edward Hawke with the impracticability “ of getting the *Barfleur* in, and the masters having “ made their reports of the soundings, that in- “ tention was laid aside as impossible. Some days “ after, he cannot be positive, but believes after the “ first council of war, Sir Edward Hawke directed “ the deponent to carry in the two Bomb-ketches “ to

" to try to bombard the *Fort*, the deponent im-
 " mediately gave their captain orders to do it, and
 " directed the pilot of the *Magnanime* to conduct
 " the *Infernal Bomb* in, and the other to follow. In
 " attempting to get in, the pilot ran the *Infernal*
 " aground, where she lay some considerable time ;
 " two row galleys seeing her alone (for she had
 " out fail'd the other Bomb, and was at least two
 " miles from her) made to attack the *Infernal* ;
 " which the deponent perceiving, hastened onboard,
 " and made a signal for all boats manned and
 " armed to go to her assistance, and went himself
 " in the *Coventry Frigate* ; on which the galleys
 " retired, after having fired a great many shot at
 " the Bomb-ketches.

" When the Bomb was aground, she was a
 " long way without the reach of her shells, with
 " the greatest requisite of powder, (which he
 " knows will fly two miles and two thirds)
 " having thrown several which fell short. The
 " *Coventry*, in attempting to get to the Bomb, ran
 " ashore five several times. After the tide had
 " flowed, and the Bomb floated, she got under
 " sail again, and worked nearer to *Fouras*, as near
 " as her draught of water would let her, and then
 " threw several shells more, none of which did
 " reach, &c.

The reader will please to compare my Evidence
 with *Sir Edward Hawke's*, with whom I had no
 Communication, he being at sea, and he'll find
 them agree in every circumstance.

I shall now proceed to facts of a stronger nature,
 to prove the impracticability and impossibility of
 carrying any ship of force to batter *Fort Fouras*.
 viz. such as the soundings taken by *Mr. Poulglass*
 master of the *Barfleur*, now master of the *Magna* ;
 nine, on the 26th of September 1757. off of the
 entrance of *Rockfort* river.

Fort Fouras S. E. about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles, and the *Isle of Enett* E. three fathoms muddy ground.

Fort Fouras S. E. $\frac{1}{2}$ E. and *Enett* East $\frac{1}{2}$ N. a foot less 3 hard ground.

Fort Fouras S. E. 6 S. about $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile and *Enett* E. by N. $\frac{1}{4}$ less, 3 fathoms.

Fort Fouras E. S. E. and the north end of *Enett* on a church on a high point of land to the eastward on the main, 3 fathoms.

The *Fort* E. S. E. and the old house on *Enett* in one with the church on the main $2\frac{1}{2}$ fathoms, hard ground.

The *Fort* E. S. E. $1\frac{1}{4}$ mile, and *Enett* N. E. by E. 2 fathoms, rockey ground.

The south end of *Enett* and the church on the main in one, 2 fathoms rockey.

Fort Fouras E. S. E. and *Enett* N. E. $\frac{1}{2}$ N. $\frac{1}{4}$ less 2 D°. ground.

The *Fort* E. by S. about 1 mile, and the north end of *Enett* near in one with the S. E. and of the *Isle D'Aix*, 9 fathoms.

The *Fort* E. one mile, and *Enett* N. N. E. 7 fathoms.

And in standing from 3 foot off each shore, across the river, or entrance of *Rockfort*, at $\frac{3}{4}$ or a mile from the *Fort*, had but 5, 6, and 7 feet water, the ground in the middle sandy.

I do declare the above to be a true account to the best of my judgment.

PHIL. POULGLASS.

Sworn before me
17th March 1758, } Commissioner of *Plymouth*.
Fred. Rogers, }

The soundings were taken at the same time by *Mr. Morant* pilot of the *Barfleur* by order of *Captain Graves*, on the ships grounding in 18 feet water

water between the *Isle of Aix* and *Fort Fouras*, and at other times also by the lieutenants of the *Royal William*, and other officers, which entirely agree with each other. To these soundings may be added the proof of ocular denomination, the shoal being seen dry every low water for more than a mile distance from *Fouras* by at least half the people of the Fleet and Army ; insomuch, that had there been a channel but the breadth of a boat we must have seen it : I had like to have forgot one circumstance more, which though only a presumptive proof, is corroborated by the others. These were the daily transactions of the *Row boats*, which came out of the river *Charante* every tide at half flood, and kept sailing or rowing under the protection of the *Fort*, and returned again always about half ebb. Had there been even this narrow Channel which has been affirmed, where was the necessity of the *Row-boats* retreating up the river again ? If these proofs which were known to the Commander in chief, had not been convincing, doubtless he would have satisfied himself by such other means as were in his power.

I now come to that part of the charge against me, which says, that Sir *Edward Hawke* having ordered me to carry the Bomb-ketches in, that I did, and run them aground. The following certificate is an unanswerable contradiction to this particular.

THESE are to certify, that when his Majesty's Bomb-ketch *Infernall*, under my command, was ordered in to batter *Fort Fouras*, Vice Admiral *Knowles* was not on board ; nor do I know that ever he was ; and that *Thierry*, the pilot of the *Magnanime*, had the sole conducting and navigating of her, and ran her ashore at a greater distance than Flight of Shell from the said Fort, and never could get her near enough for the Shells to reach

I with

with the greatest quantity of powder. Given under my hand, on board his Majesty's Sloop *Infernal*, the 5th Day of February 1758.

JAMES MACKENZIE.

As the circumstance of carrying in the *Barfleur*, and carrying in the Bomb-ketches, are confounded together, it is proper to let the reader know, the first happened on the 25th, and the last on the 29th September, and that in neither had Vice-Admiral *Knowles* more to do, or farther concern, than to deliver Sir *Edward Hawke*'s orders to those captains who were to execute them, and report their answers and transactions, which I did; the rest lay with the Commander in Chief.

Were farther Testimony wanting to prove that I was not on board the Bomb-ketch, Captain *Keppel* can attest that I was on shore with him in the *Island of Aix*, reconnoitring with our Glasses the bay of *Chatelaillon*, when the galleys went to attack the bomb; and that upon hearing their guns, I ran immediately to my boat, and went on board, and made the signal for all boats manned and armed, and sent them to the bomb-ketche's assistance.

"All these notable exploits were performed by
 "Vice-admiral *Knowles*, the same who it is said
 "advised Sir *Edward Hawke* not even to enter into
 "the road of *Basque*, lest he should be bombarded."
 Neither Sir *Edward Hawke* nor myself were acquainted with the road of *Basque*; but we both well knew the extent and distance necessary to anchor so large a Fleet in, and that it was also proper, when that Fleet was anchored, that it should not be in the enemy's power to annoy or destroy the ships; and therefore I wrote a Letter to Sir *Edward Hawke*, and received from him the following Answer.

SIR,

SIR,

“ I am entirely of your opinion, that it will be
 “ proper to send a couple of Cutters a-head of you
 “ going in, and for one of them to run near about
 “ gun-shot of the *Isle of Aix*, and if the Fort should
 “ fire at her, you will be enabled to judge better
 “ where to anchor. I think you cannot send a bet-
 “ ter man on this service than *Jasper*, who, I dare
 “ say, will acquit himself in it extremely well. It
 “ is certainly very material, that the Fleet should be
 “ safe where they come to an anchor, that they
 “ can’t be hit by any of the shot from the enemy’s
 “ Forts. I must therefore desire you will come
 “ to, the instant you shall be in a proper birth, for
 “ the rest of the Fleet to anchor by you.

I am, &c.

ED. HAWKE.

This piece of necessary caution, which it is plain Sir *Edward Hawke* approved, has been candidly construed into fear of being bombarded. But I would ask any one acquainted with military operations, whether they ever heard of a General’s encamping his army under the command of the enemy’s cannon? The same prudence is as necessary in anchoring a Fleet, and especially when it is encumbered with a number of transports.

In answer to the charge of my sending away the Pilot destined to conduct the fleet, &c. I shall recapitulate part of my Affidavit at the Court Martial upon that Subject; and to which transaction the whole Fleet and Forces were Eye-witnesses.

“ The signal being given, the deponent took
 “ his leave about noon of Sir *Edward Hawke*, and
 “ made sail with his division. The *Medway*, which
 “ was a-head by Sir *Edward*’s Order, to look out
 “ for land, about 2 or 3 o’ Clock, as near as he
 “ could remember, made a signal for seeing the
 “ land,

" land, very soon after the deponent saw it him-
 " self : and as his own Ship, and those of his di-
 " vision, were ordered to prepare for the attack,
 " the Lieutenant or Captain came to acquaint him
 " the Ship was clear and ready for action ; this
 " was about 4 o' clock, the wind at that time,
 " and to the best of his remembrance the whole
 " day, was about N. E. As he looked upon a
 " Ship cleared, and in order for battle, as a very
 " entertaining sight, he desired Major-General
 " Conway to go down to see his Ship between
 " decks : while they were viewing her, one of his
 " Lieutenants came down, sent by the Captain to
 " acquaint him Captain *Keppel* hailed the Ship, and
 " told them there was a *French* Man of War stand-
 " ing in for the Fleet ; for some small space of
 " time the deponent took no notice of it, thinking
 " it impossible the Fleet should not see her ; a se-
 " cond message was sent him down to the same
 " purpose ; he then went upon deck immediately
 " with General *Conway*, and was shewn her by his
 " Captain, when with their Glasses they plainly
 " discovered her to be a two decked Ship ; she
 " soon made a private signal, by hoisting a Jack
 " at her mizzen-topmast-head : The deponent was
 " in doubt, whether to make a signal to any of his
 " division to chace, being ordered on a different
 " service, which he took notice of to General
 " Conway and his Captain. He judges he was
 " then at least five miles a-head of Sir *Edward*
 " *Hawke*, and the ship much nearer to him and
 " his division than she was to Sir *Edward Hawke*
 " and the rest of the Fleet ; and he plainly saw, if
 " some of his division did not chace her, none of
 " the others could possibly see her, so as to chace
 " her, when night came on. The *Magnanime*
 " was then about 2 miles to Leeward of them, up-
 " on which he threw out her signal to chace, and
 " hailed

“ hailed Captain *Keppel* in the *Torbay*, and directed him to chace also, observing at the same time to General *Conway* and his Captain, that if Sir *Edward Hawke* did not approve of what he had done, he would certainly call them in again; but instead of that, Sir *Edward* threw out their signals to chace, by way of confirming what he had done, and in addition, made the *Royal William*'s signal, also belonging to his division; two more signals for Ships in the rest of the Fleet were thrown out afterwards, but very soon recalled. Early the next morning, Sir *Edward Hawke* sent the deponent the following order, to take under his command three other ships, in the room of those three ships sent to chace, *viz.*

By Sir Edward Hawke, Knight of the Bath, Admiral of the Blue Squadron of his Majesty's Fleet.

DUBLIN, BURFORD, ACHILLES. “ You are hereby required and directed to take under your command the ships named in the margin; the Captains of which have my orders to follow your directions; and proceed, without a moment's loss of time, to put in execution the orders you received from me yesterday. For which this shall be your order.”

To *Charles Knowles*, Vice Admiral of the Red Squadron of his Majesty's Fleet.

“ Given under my hand on board his Majesty's ship *Ramillies*, at sea, this 21st September 1757.”

ED. HAWKE.

By Command of the Admiral.

J. HAY.

“ In

" In obedience to that order, the deponent proceeded with his division with all the sail they could carry, to get in, and make what land it was: He judges it was about 9 o'clock when they were got within about 2 miles of the land in 11 Fathoms water, very hazy thick weather, so as the Pilot desired the Ship might be tacked, and laid with the head off, till it cleared, so as he could see his marks. Whilst he was laying to, he made a signal for the captains of his division, and ordered them to send for their Pilots; no two of whom agreed what land it was; their several Examinations he took down, and sent them to Sir *Edward Hawke*, who by that time was advanced nearer to him by 2 or 3 miles than he was before, as he, the deponent, lay with his head off shore. In his letter to Sir *Edward*, he acquainted him, that not one of the Pilots would take charge to lead in, even with a twenty gun Ship; if they would, his division should have followed her. Soon after his boat went away, he made a Signal for speaking with the Admiral, seeing he continued under Sail, and did not stop to take up his boat. At the same time, he made sail with his division towards him, and by about 12 joined him; when the deponent got on board him, he was surprized to see Mr. *Keppel* on board, and also to find the *Magnanime* and *Royal William* had joined him again, which the thick weather prevented the deponent's knowing. Sir *Edward Hawke*, upon the deponent's acquainting him with what had happened, (for he thinks he got on board before his letter) immediately sent for the Pilot of the *Magnanime*, at the same time telling the deponent, he judged what was the matter, when he saw him bring to; for his pilot had refused carrying his Ship in. When the pilot of the

" *Magnanime* came on board, he immediately told
 " them what land it was, and, after offering to
 " carry in the Fleet, returned on board his own
 " ship, and led the deponent's division in, the Ad-
 " miral and the rest of the Fleet following. The
 " wind was pretty fresh all this day, till towards
 " the evening, when about 6 o'clock the tide of
 " Flood being spent, the *Magnanime* made the
 " signal to anchor; they were then in the mouth
 " of the Pertuis of *Antioche*. About 8 o'clock,
 " Sir *Edward Hawke* made the signal for the Fleet
 " to anchor, and they continued working in, and
 " anchored as they came to proper Births all night.
 " Early in the morning of the 22d, the *Magna-*
 " *nime* made the signal, when the deponent weigh-
 " ed with his division, and Sir *Edward* and the rest
 " of the Fleet weighed also: About 11 o'clock,
 " it falling calm, the signal was again made to an-
 " chor; about 2 or 3 a small breeze springing up
 " westerly, the *Magnanime* made the signal, and
 " weighed again, and the deponent ran in with his
 " division, till between 9 and 10 o'clock at night,
 " Sir *Edward Hawke*, and his division, and all
 " the transports following, when the deponent's
 " division came to an anchor."

By this it evidently appears, there were but 3
 hours time lost; for at 9 o'clock in the morning,
 the Pilot refused taking charge of the ships of my
 division, and at 12 the *Magnanime* had joined us
 again, and we proceeded. It likewise appears, that
 Sir *Edward Hawke* repeated those ships signals to
 chace, which was an approbation of my conduct,
 and which he confirmed afterwards—more fully,
 by a public declaration in my presence. In fact,
 it cannot strictly be said, that one moment's time was
 lost by those ships chacing; because if the reader
 will please to observe, the calms we met with after-
 wards, and the tides, which obliged the Fleet to
 anchor twice, would equally have delayed us, had

we

we been 2 or 3 miles farther to windward, which is more than we could have gained in those 3 hours, as the wind was at N. E. which is right out of the bay.

III.

“ In the first place, then, though I have by no means that high opinion of the French wisdom and ability which you entertain, and on every occasion extol so highly ; yet I do suppose, that in matters of defence, they conduct themselves on principles similar to those which are adopted by the rest of mankind. I do suppose, for instance, that when they build a fort, it is intended either to offend or defend. Fouras was weak to the land ; it stood at the water’s edge to guard the Channel ; it stood even on a bank that ran into the water ; and as Col. Wolfe, who seems to be the first officer who thought of reconnoitring it, tells us, it had 24 embrasures to the water-side. What was the use of this Fort ? Was it to guard a bank of sand, over which scarce a Thames wherry could pass ? If the Guns of no Ship whatever could reach the Fort, could the guns of the Fort reach any Ship ? According to Mr. Knowles, there was no channel at all, or it lay out of gun-shot of the Fort. At 2 miles distance, the Vice-Admiral’s master found but 6 Feet water at high water ; at near 3 miles distance, the Bombketch, which drew but 11 feet water, went aground. The Coventry Frigate did the same farther out than that, and the Barfleur at a still greater distance. Now, tho’ after all this delay and hazard to the ships, that Admiral thought fit to sound and try the depth of the water at a distance from the Fort, where no cannon could reach ; yet it is astonishing to find not a single proof attempted to be given of the depth of the water near the shore, and within gun-shot of the Fort. Is it impossible, then, that the channel, a

“ narrow one, might run in shore? Is it not demon-
 “ strable, that it did so, both from the nature of the
 “ thing, and the evidence of those who knew and had
 “ navigated it? What says Bonneau the Fisherman,
 “ examined by General Conway, and others? There
 “ were 4 Fathom (24 Feet) water, at half cannon-
 “ shot from Fort Fouras, a depth sufficient for a 60
 “ gun ship. Now, though the land-officers did not
 “ chuse to trust to the intelligence of a Fisherman for
 “ the state of the Fortifications at Rochefort; yet it
 “ seems to be the best evidence, as to the depth of the
 “ channel, that could have been wished. There was
 “ the united testimony of Thierry and Bonneau, joined
 “ to the reason of the thing, that there must be a
 “ channel within gun-shot of the Fort, though the
 “ Ships miss'd the entrance of it. I might add, that
 “ though the Vice-Admiral could not conduct a Ship
 “ to it, there were Captains in the Fleet, who, it
 “ seems, offered it. Captain Colby offered to carry
 “ in the Princess Amelia. How, then, can we un-
 “ riddle this mystery? For a mystery there certainly
 “ is. Perhaps it is easier to guess the solution, than
 “ to explain it.

“ From all these circumstances, I say, it is clear,
 “ that Fouras must be and was accessible by sea; that
 “ the Board of Officers are theretore justified on their
 “ report, that the not attacking it by sea, appeared to
 “ be one of the causes of the Failure of the expedition.”

It has ever been a Maxim with the greatest Generals in all ages, not to despise an enemy too much, and by that maxim they have shewn their wisdom; and tho' the French do not deserve any singular praise, for the erecting Fort Fouras on the spot on which it is situated, it being rather by chance than design it was built there; yet it has its uses, both to offend and defend. Fouras was the

tower

tower of an old Parish church ; which soon after the foundation of *Rochefort* in 1688, *Louis XIVth.* purchased of the proprietors, to make a *Tour de Garde*, for repeating signals from the Isles of *Oleron* and *Aix* up to *Rochefort*, which is one of its present uses. A Fort and Garrison being established in the *Isle of Aix*, *Fouras* was found to be the nearest and most secure communication in all weathers with that Island ; so that in process of time, barracks and lodgments were built therein, and it was fortified to the sea by a strait curtain, and a round Tower in the middle, containing 18 Ambrasures, in which was mounted but 16 guns, and those, in my opinion, not larger than 12 pounders. It has 4 or 5 more guns in the returning angle to the northward ; but how is it defended on the land-side, is unknown to me.

This is a true account of the rise, state and condition of that formidable Fort, and of which an exact description was taken before it was reconnoitred by Col. *Wolfe* ; for I took a draught of it immediately after the surrender of the *Isle of Aix*. From *Fouras* to *Rochefort* is but 4 miles in a strait line, the road good, and no Rivers to cross. Plain principles, therefore, similar to those adopted by the rest of mankind, certainly led the *French* to fortify this convenient spot against any descent that might be made, and not to defend the entrance into the river *Charante*. For it was demonstrated by the Bomb-ketch, and the soundings confirm it, that Ships may pass and repass up the River *Charante* at a random-shot distance, if not quite out of gun-shot of that Fort ; and it was near high-water at the time the *Coventry* and Ketch ran aground, neither of which were within gun-shot. It is proved before, that the masters went a sounding on the 26th, and this circumstance of the Bomb-ketches being aground, happened not before the

29th ; it is therefore the more astonishing to find, that this author should assert no attempt had been made to sound the Depth of water near the shore, and within gun-shot of the Fort ; because he had not been informed when it appears by the soundings already recited from Mr. *Poul-glass*, that he had tried the depth of water within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of the Fort, and from 3 foot water quite across the River. The same had likewise been done by the Lieutenants of the *Royal William*, and other Officers and Pilots, who all agreed in the same shoalings. It is therefore impossible there should be any channel, even a narrow one, and it is demonstrable there was not, both from the circumstances of the thing, and the evidence of those who traversed it. To the truth of this *Thierry*, the Pilot, would now readily subscribe his Testimony, would I accept it. A Channel, and a large one, up the river *Charante*, no body denies. First rate ships are built at *Rockefort*, and go up and down that channel, but it does not lie near enough to *Fort Fouras* to batter it with ships, let who will say to the contrary.

I will now reason with the author on his own principles, and allow what *Bonneau* the Fisherman said to be true, that there was 4 fathom (24 feet) water at half cannon-shot from the Fort. Even that circumstance will not establish his Hypothesis, " that *Fouras* was attackable and accessible by sea." A cannon-shot, most people know, will fly upwards of 2 miles, half cannon-shot will be about a mile, or more ; now, allow at that distance, or even at half a mile, 24 feet water, the tide ordinarily rises 14 or 15 feet, in spring-tides more, near 20. The *Magnanime* drew upwards of 23 feet water, the *Barfleur* near 22 : suppose either of these Ships to have been lightened 2 feet and a half, or 3 feet, which is more than could well be done with safety. Allow such Ships, then, to get within half a mile of the Fort, before they grounded ;

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Water line Lightened to High water line



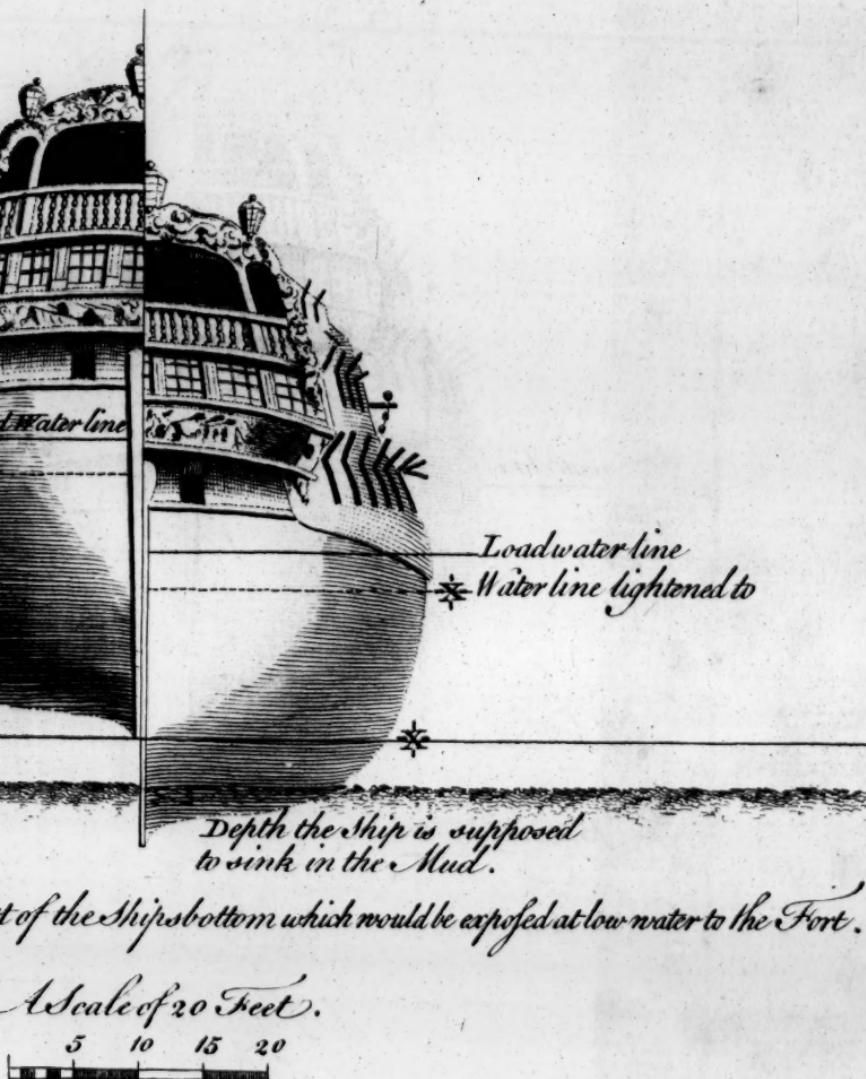
Low Water line

The Mud or Bottom

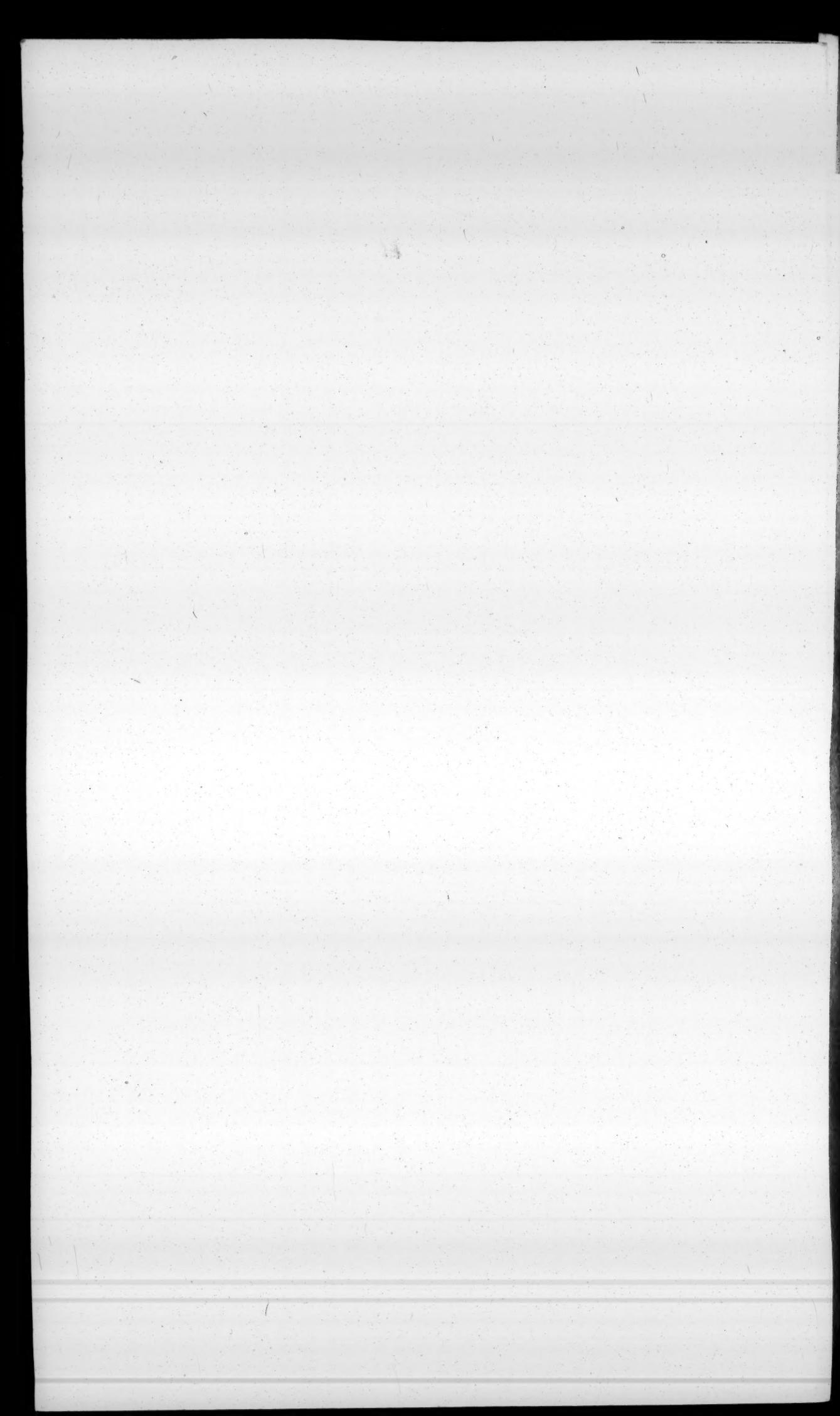
From * to * is that part of the

A Sea

To face Page 23.



D. Jeffreys Sculp.



grounded ; suppose them also to set upright in the mud ; and every thing to be conducted with the greatest skill, the tide ebbs fifteen feet ; those ships will draw 19 or 20 feet, subtract either of these from the depth of the water, 24 feet, (at half a mile distance) and there will remain about five feet ; so that a space of fourteen feet in these ships bottoms, fore and aft from the water-line downwards, will remain dry, and be exposed to the fire of the Fort until the next high water, when the tide must necessarily fill them ; consequently there will be an end then of those ships, and so of whatever number more you make trial.

Let us examine now what damage ships at that distance can do to a *Fort*. Sea officers will tell you, none ; and experience in many cases has proved it. Thus far in answer to the testimony of *Bonneau*. Now let us see, how far we can unite the testimony of *Thierry* with it. *Sir Edward Hawke* deposes, soon after the giving me orders to have the *Barfleur* lighten'd, that this pilot recollects himself, and declared that even thus lighten'd the *Barfleur* could not be brought near enough. Add to this *Captain Mackenzie's* certificate, that *Thierry* had the sole conducting and navigating the *Infernal Bomb*, which he ran aground, and it will be impossible, to unite this with the testimony of *Bonneau*, that there was a channel within gun-shot of the Fort. The report of *Captain Colby's* offering to carry in the *Princess Amelia*, is a mystery that may be unriddled by a monosyllable, that may be guess'd at without explanation.

Take all the circumstances together that have been mentioned, and it is clear that *Fort Fouras* was not attackable or accessible by sea, and therefore the not attacking it by sea, was not one of the causes of the failure of the Expedition. I have said this not merely to justify my own conduct, which has been

so much affected by this article, but to evince the impossibility of the thing itself.

IV.

“ *In the postscript it is said, that the Prudente, a French ship of 74 guns, with all her stores, &c. on board, escaped our fleet by running up to Rochefort, thro’ that very channel which was not deep enough for an English long-boat.* ”

This circumstance of the *Prudente*’s running up the *Charante* just before the attack of the *Isle of Aix* is here laid hold of, as a farther proof of there being a channel near *Fouras*; and by the member of parliament is roundly asserted, that she passed within reach of the Fort. The short history of this circumstance is as follows. The morning after the arrival of the Fleet in the road of *Basque*, I discovered at day-break, a large Ship of the Enemy’s laying within the *Isle of Aix*, on which I went immediately and acquainted *Sir Edward Hawke*, and desired he would order a 60 or 70 gun Ship to go and anchor to the northward of the *Isle of Aix*, as soon as any wind sprung up, (it being then calm) to prevent her getting out that way, and for some other ship, and a fire ship to attack her where she lay, while the ships of my division were battering the *Fort of Aix*, not apprehending the Enemy’s ship was lighten’d, and could have run up the channel! On these services *Sir Edward Hawke* detached *Captain Proby*, *Captain Byron*, and *Captain Barington*; and as soon as the French man of War saw us weigh our anchors and get under sail, she immediately cut her cables, and run up within the river’s mouth. Some days after the surrender of the *Isle of Aix*, I received a letter from *Sir Edward Hawke*, of which the following is an extract, and which sufficiently contradicts the assertion of both these authors,

SIR,

S I R,

“ One of the prisoners I have on board, who belonged to the *Prudente*, and was put in the Fort, to assist in its defence, informs me, that when the *Prudente* ran up, she threw over board her guns, and has left a buoy upon them. I would have you order it to be look’d for and cut away.”

Accordingly I did give orders to *Captain Graves*, who found it, and cut it away ; and also took up one of her anchors and cables. I would only observe upon this, that if the testimony of *Bonneau* the fisherman, or any other prisoner, is to be relied on, why then is not the testimony of this man to be relied on, who actually belong’d to the ship and which was confirmed by finding the buoy, and taking up the anchor and cable ?

V.

“ In the reply of the same author, to the answer of his military arguments by the officer, (p. 47,---8.) is the following passage. “ Did they (meaning the Council of War) so much as examine *Thierry* the pilot, sent with them by the ministers as one on whose accounts they were to depend, and who at that time had given a proof that he deserved some credit, by his conduct before the Fort of Aix, and his knowledge of the road ? They did not. And now, it seems, *Thierry* is a silly Fellow, the Magnanime sewed in the mud before the Fort of Aix, yet not through the ignorance of the pilot, but through the spirit of her Commander, who, as the French said, seemed to sail into the Fort and take it, without firing a gun. *Thierry* then had not miscarried in carrying in the Bomb-ketch, and he had done all which he undertook before the council to do ; he had brought the Fleet safe into

" the road, when the pilot of the *Neptune*, and all
 " the other pilots in the Fleet, had declared themselves
 " unable to do it. Yet this *Thierry*, sent out with
 " the strongest recommendations of the government,
 " whose conduct to that moment had merited full cre-
 " dit, was never so much as sent for to their Council
 " of War ; but that very pilot of the *Neptune* (Ad-
 " miral Knowles's pilot) who was so ignorant that
 " he did not know even the road, and was obliged to
 " lie by till *Thierry* came to carry his ship in, was
 " the person on whose thorough knowledge of every
 " thing relative to *Rochefort*, the Council of War
 " thought fit to proceed.

In answer to this charge, which is not particularly against me, I do declare, that *Thierry* the pilot was often examined by the sea and land officers, sometimes collectively, and separately at other times, to every circumstance relating to the expedition, as they occurred to them ; particularly the night before the council of War, to which he was summoned, though he did not appear ; and all the intelligence he could give them they had, during the passage and previous to any council of war. As to the pilot of the *Neptune*, it is well known that I never placed any confidence in him ; nor did I ever suffer him to conduct my ship, either into the road of *Basque*, or against the Fort, after his betraying his ignorance of the land. As to *Thierry* the pilot, I never knew he was recommended by the government, or that any ministers of the government knew there was such a person. I know I mentioned him at the Cabinet Council, as one acquainted with the French coast, his captain having told me so ; and I offered to go down to *Portsmouth*, to take his examination ; but the Council resolved to send for him up to town.

VI.

The same sort of charge which has been exhibited against Mr. Knowles in the preceding pages, has been repeated in another pamphlet, called a vindication of Mr. Pitt, by a Member of parliament, p. 30.---7.

The answer already given to the charges in the other pamphlets, I apprehend, is a sufficient refutation of all the particulars advanced in this, which relates to my conduct in the late Expedition, excepting a single question, which the author calls upon me to answer. “Was *Thierry* on board the “*Barfleur* at that time?” To this I answer, I do not know; it is totally immaterial; but this I do know, that had there been water enough for the *Barfleur*, to have gone down to batter the Fort, the pilot *Thierry* was to have been the man to conduct her. The *Barfleur* was not run aground by the unskilfulness of her pilot, for she was never got under sail. She grounded at an anchor where she lay: lightening of her for that service would have been a work of two days at least, as all her provisions, cables, stores, and in short, every thing but her guns, ammunition, and ballast, must have been put ashore on the *Isle of Aix*. This is a circumstance that that worthy author seems to have been ignorant of; and during this preparation, there would have been time enough to have sent for *Thierry* the pilot, to have carried her in against the Fort. But it appears by *Sir Edward Hawke's* deposition, that this able pilot had found out his mistake before I could well deliver *Sir Edward's* orders to *Captain Graves* for that purpose. *Sir Edward Hawke* observes farther, that he look'd upon this proposal, when the pilot made it, as a *Gasconade*; and he remembers without doubt as well as I do, the pilot's expressing at the cabinet council great diffidence of the depth of water about that

that Fort, which *Mr. Pitt* also confirms in his testimony at the Court-martial, *viz.* that nothing was clear about the taking any place by sea but the *Isle of Aix*.

My experience in the attack and defence of places made me judge, in looking over the plan, when it was under consideration before the Cabinet-Council, that the attack of *Fouras* was necessary to the success of the expedition, as it secured a safe communication with the Fleet, when the troops were landed, and therefore I then proposed the lightening a ship for that purpose. But after the surrender of the *Isle of Aix*, a favourable conjuncture seeming to present itself for seizing on that Fort, I wrote Sir *Edward Hawke* the following letter.

S I R,

I congratulate you upon this first attempt against the enemy ; the Fort having surrendered to the *Magnanime* and *Barfleur*, by the time the *Neptune* could well let go her anchor, and bring her broadside to pass ; so that the honour of the day is entirely owing to Captain *Howe* and Captain *Graves* ; the number killed and wounded is very trifling, but you will receive the particulars as soon as I can get them. If you do not intend to come up this evening, if you will please to make my signal, I will endeavour to come up to you, to receive your further commands ; for I think we should strike while the Iron is hot.

I am, &c.

During the passage, I fitted all the long-boats in the Fleet with small guns in their bows, got the carriages and cannon ready for Landing at a moment's warning, and did every thing that was in my power to insure the success of the expedition, info-

insomuch that it was never suggested, nor even whispered, that there was any backwardness in me. It was my station to obey, I did not command.

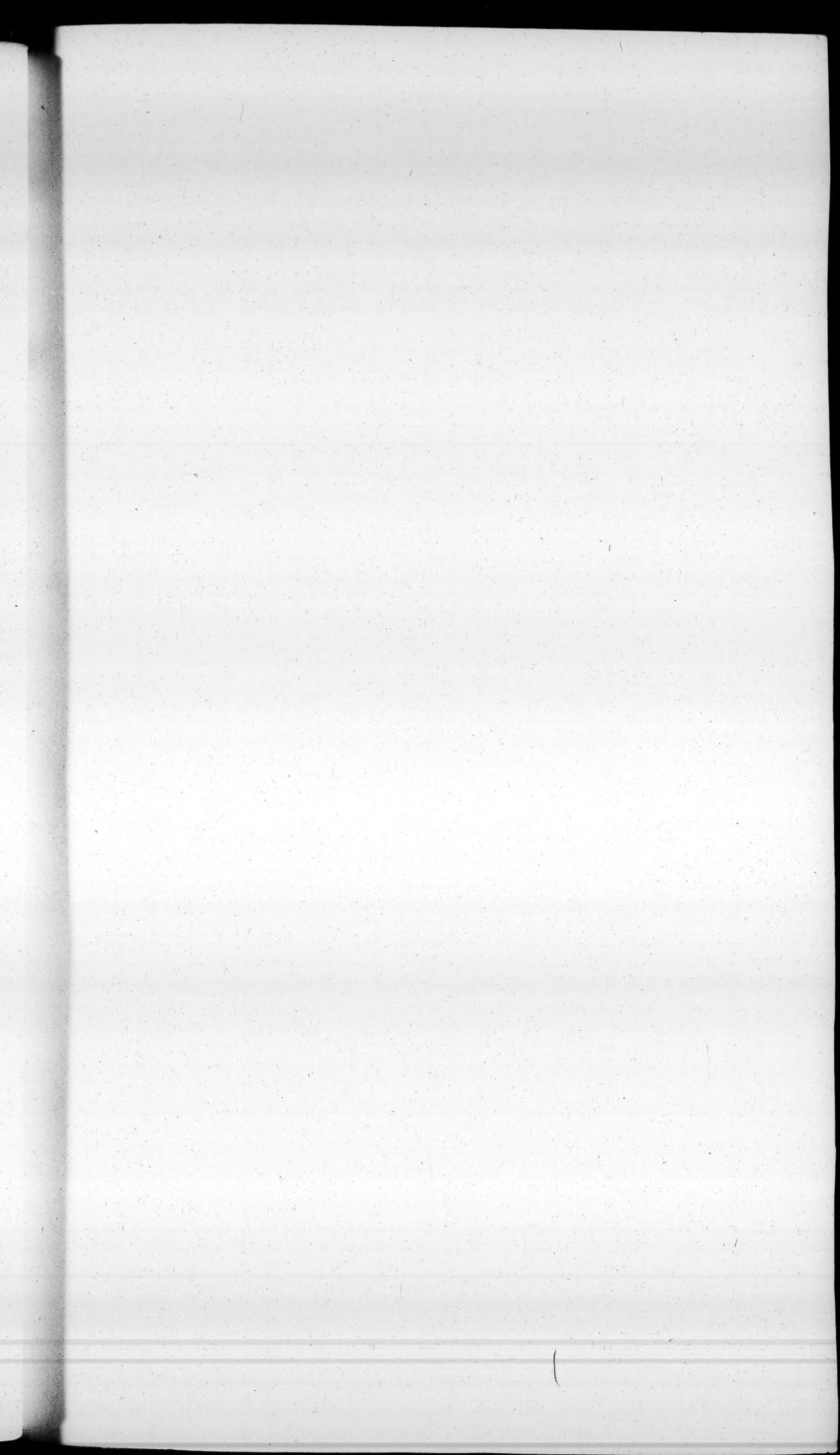
Let the reader lay these several Facts together which have been related, and notwithstanding the pains that have been taken to make the public believe, that I greatly contributed to the failure of the Expedition, he will find, that I had, and could have no other share in its execution, than in conveying the orders I received from Sir *Edward Hawke*, and seeing them obeyed by the proper Officers. Was the Case as it has been represented in these anonymous libels; was Vice-Admiral *Knowles* the cause of laying aside the attack on *Fort Fouras*; the conclusion to be drawn from it must be, that the Commanders in Chief, and other members of the Council of War, were all determined by the Vice-Admiral, and had no judgment of their own whereon to found their opinion: It must suppose Sir *Edward Hawke* to have laid down the Command, and delegated it to Mr. *Knowles*; it must suppose Mr. *Knowles* to have been guided by opinion, without any experiments; and it must, in the end, arraign the justice and wisdom of the administration, for not bringing him to justice for such a notorious breach of duty, and for their choice of Officers so unfit for such a command.

I said at the Court-martial on Sir *John Mordaunt*, that if I knew of any cowardice or treachery in the execution of this enterprize, that I would declare it openly; and I added, that I hoped, if any one could charge me with being guilty of either, that he would do it, in order that I might be brought to justice. These words, and many others which I spoke, and thought essential, are omitted in the printed proceedings of the Court-martial. This was a declaration, however, which betrayed neither Guilt nor Fear; and I repeat it here

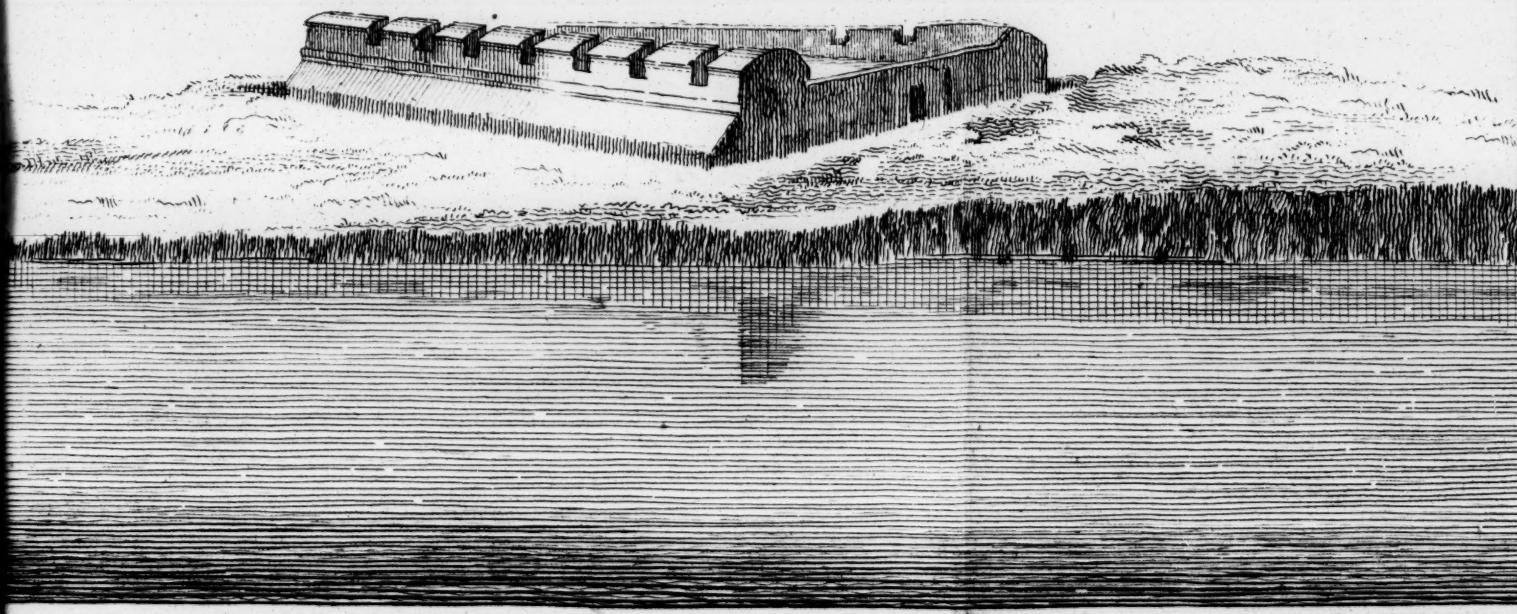
here, to shew that I ought to be acquitted of both ; or, as it is never too late to bring Criminals to justice, that I ought to undergo a public trial, and if Guilty a publick condemnation. My Commander in Chief has never so much as accused me of neglect or breach of duty : and he is not only the properest judge of my behaviour, but the proper person, if he disapproved it, to bring me to a trial to answer his accusation.

Hard, indeed, is my fate, to stand exculpated in the opinion of my superior officer, who saw my conduct, and under whose command I acted, and yet to be singled out as the only flag on that expedition left unemployed in a time of war : And this after Forty one years constant and faithful Service in the Navy.

CHARLES KNOWLES.



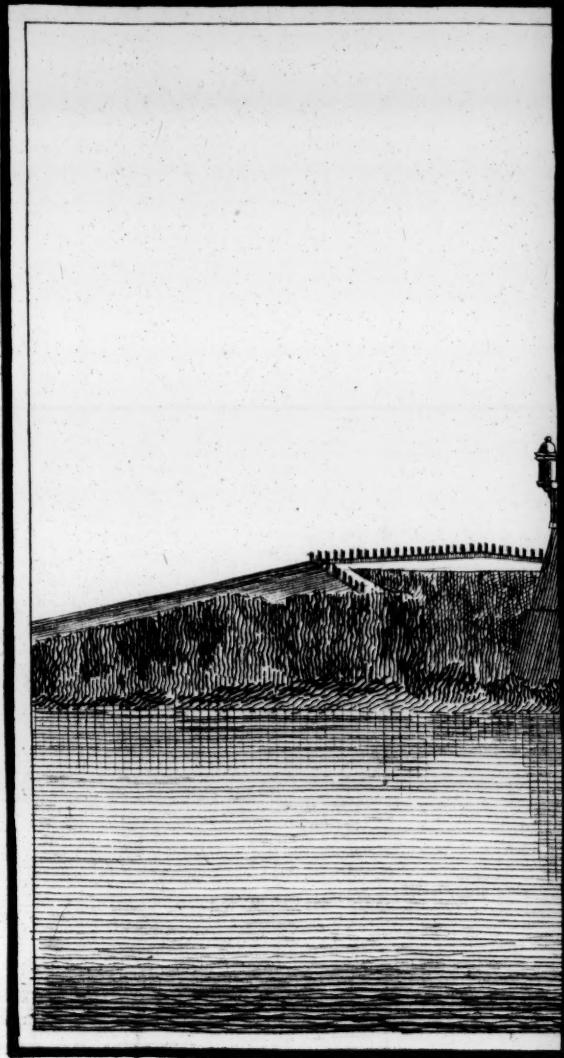
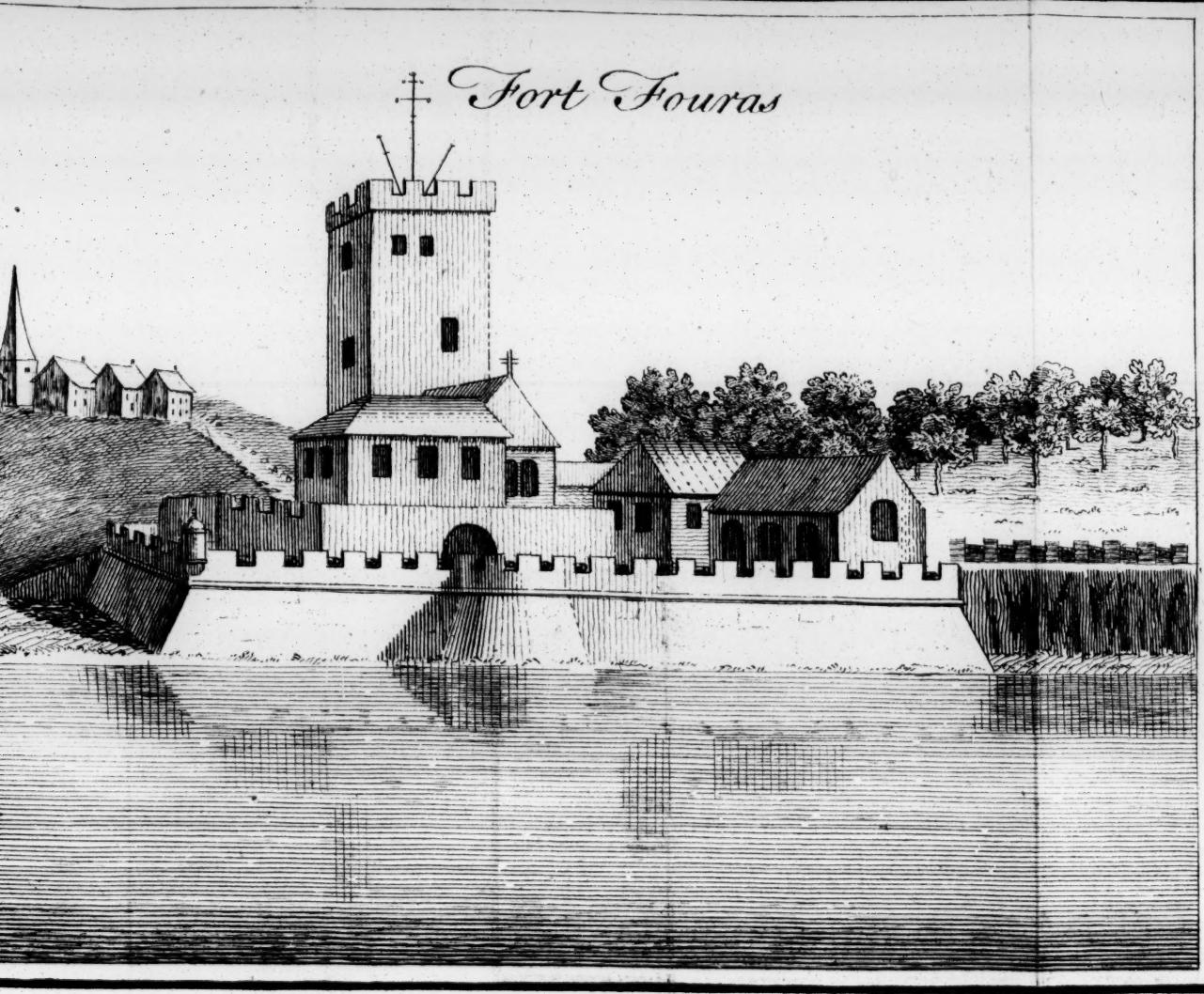
Fort de l'Aiguille.



Fort de l'Aiguille.

Fort Fouras

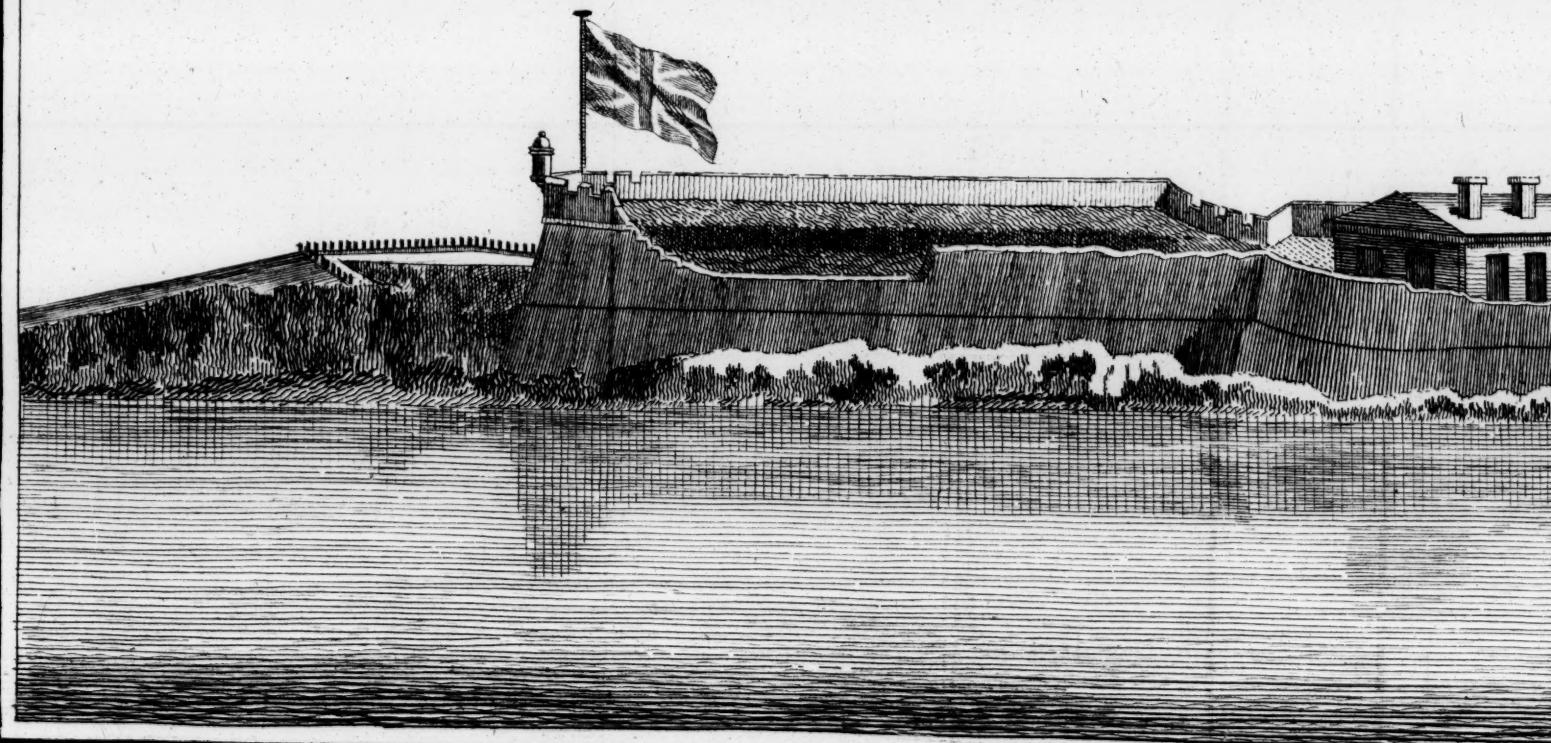
A Prospect of the Land ab



Fort de la Point

about the Mouth of the River Charante, from Fort de la Aiguille

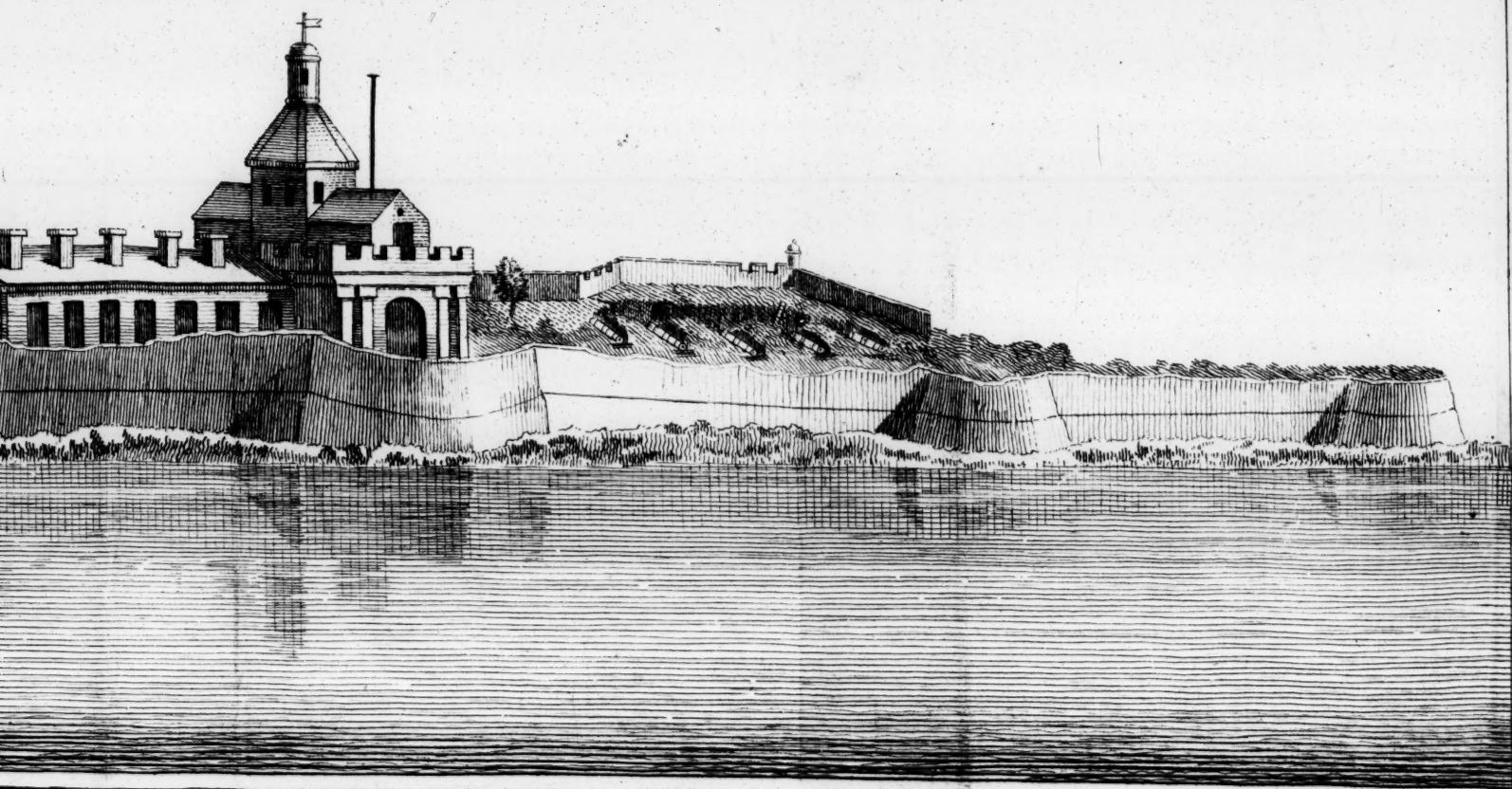
A View of the Fort



Port de Barques

from Fort de la Aiguille to L'Isle Madame, taken at about

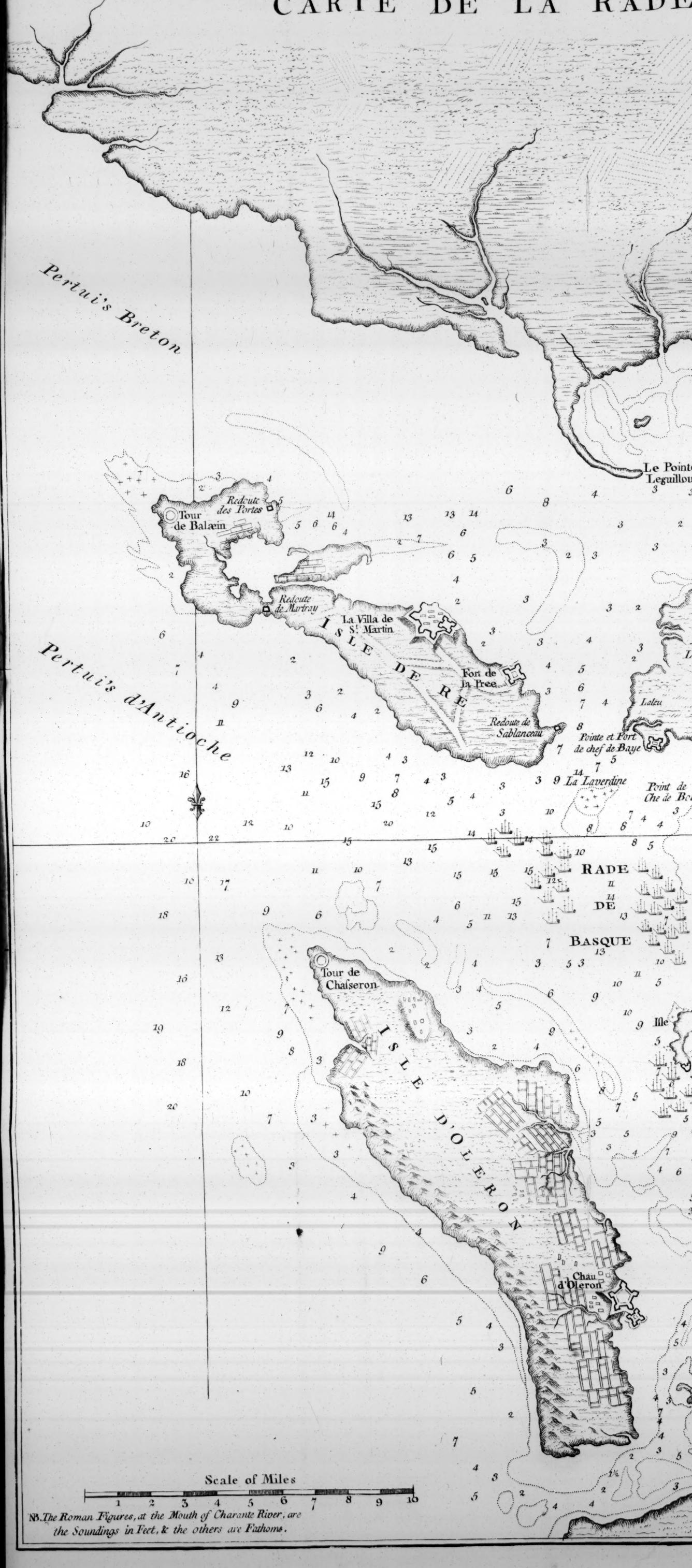
ort in the Island of Aix.



S. Isle Madame.

about 5 Miles distant.

CARTE DE LA RADE



BAIE DE BASQUE



Engraved by T. Jefferys. 1758.